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7 December 1981

Talking Points for the DCI

I. Soviet Responses to US Options toward Libya

The Soviets and Libyans share a mutual interest in undermining Western influence--especially in the Middle East and North Africa--and fostering the emergence of radical political elements there and elsewhere. In spite of these shared short-term objectives, Libya and the USSR have incompatible ideologies, and neither trusts the other. The Soviets, for their part, are suspicious of Qadhafi and consider some of his actions adventuristic and counterproductive. [REDACTED]

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Nevertheless, over the past year, in response to the tougher US stance toward Libya, Qadhafi has drawn somewhat closer to the USSR. The Soviets and Libyans have increased their political and, particularly, their military cooperation. The Soviets, however, have been careful not to make any commitments to come to Qadhafi's defense, and they have not identified the USSR too closely with his regime. Moscow, for example reacted very cautiously to the Gulf of Sidra incident in August, denouncing the US shoot-down of SU-22s but not reacting directly. [REDACTED]

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In reaction to the withdrawal of Americans from Libya:

- Moscow would give broad propaganda play to the US evacuation, hoping both to deter the US from military action and fan Libyan apprehensions of US intentions in order to increase Tripoli's dependence on the USSR.
- The USSR might deploy either reconnaissance aircraft or naval ships to Libya as a show of support. [REDACTED]

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In reaction to economic sanctions:

- The Soviets would exploit Qadhafi's increased vulnerability.
- Moscow could extend credit for arms sales, adding economic dependence to existing Libyan security dependence.
- Soviets could also encourage Libya to barter oil to their East European allies. [REDACTED]

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In the event of US military retaliation against Libya, it is highly unlikely that the Soviets would respond militarily. They would try to take political advantage instead. The USSR has neither the interest nor the military assets to block a US attack.

- The USSR wants to avoid direct confrontation with the US in Libya.
- The Soviet Mediterranean Squadron is no match for US forces in the area.
- The Soviets have little capability to interfere with a B-52 strike.

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The Soviets, however, would move quickly to exacerbate any strains in relations between the US and moderate Arabs.

-- Moscow would also seek to tighten relations and take advantage of other client states--South Yemen, Ethiopia, Angola, Cuba--whose apprehension about US intentions would increase. [REDACTED]

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II. Prospects for Increased Soviet-Libyan Military Cooperation

The proposed action against Libya would likely accelerate the current trend of increased Soviet-Libyan military cooperation. [REDACTED]

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-- The USSR has considerable interest in greater air and naval access to support its Mediterranean Squadron.

-- Deployments could also serve as a constraint on US action. [REDACTED]

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Increased Soviet presence could include:

-- Additional port visits and deployments of reconnaissance planes.

-- Joint Soviet-Libyan air and naval exercises.

-- Continuous stationing of reconnaissance planes in Libya.

-- Stationing of repair and support vessels.

-- Deployment of Soviet AWACS-type planes to Libya.

-- Deployment of Soviet personnel to man air-defense units.

[REDACTED]

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In expanding their military presence, the Soviets would be careful to maintain freedom of action in any future US-Libyan confrontation. [REDACTED]

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- Permanent, fixed installations seem less likely.
- Deployment of ground forces combat or airborne forces unlikely. [REDACTED]

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The USSR's primary concern is avoiding direct embroilment in a US-Libyan conflict. The USSR would be less likely to expand military cooperation with Libya if it thought it risked conflict with the US. Actions that would deter Moscow include:

- Repeated US airstrikes against Libyan targets.
- A US naval blockade of Libya.

US diplomatic actions or actions the USSR viewed as bluster would be unlikely to deter greater Soviet military involvement.

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III. Qadhafi's Likely Reactions to US Options

With respect to the US demarche alone, the more public the demarche the greater the likelihood that Qadhafi will feel backed into a corner and perceive a need to stand up to the US or take some kind of defensive action.

- The success of the demarche regarding the plot to assassinate Ambassador Eilts had to do with its being conducted entirely in private.
- Qadhafi is not irrational. He is a survivor who has in the past reversed courses that have proved imprudent. Shifting the confrontation into the public arena, however, could involve issues of face and activate Qadhafi's psychological need to stand up to a superior enemy.
- The US might consider utilizing other message-bearers, at

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least as a supplement to a formal demarche. Shaykh Zayid of the UAE is a possibility; the UAE is looking after Libya's interests in the US, and Zayid recently gave Qadhafi a "Dutch Uncle" lecture on his policies, demanding that he stop trying to subvert Saudi Arabia and financing radical Palestinians. Any intermediary should play on the theme that Qadhafi is hurting his own prospects for regional leadership and alienating Islamic leaders; Qadhafi's strong aspirations for regional leadership could make this approach highly effective.

- The US might consider withdrawing US personnel before delivering a demarche to Qadhafi, in order to minimize the risk to US personnel inside Libya. We do think, however, that delivery of the demarche alone will not jeopardize the lives of Americans in Libya; we might expect problems in securing exist visas and other forms of obstruction. [REDACTED]

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If the US utilizes economic sanctions against Libya, the likelihood of harm to Americans inside Libya rises, although we still believe the odds favor their being allowed to depart safely.

- Qadhafi undoubtedly knows that US economic sanctions will not hurt him, although he will be annoyed.
- He might consider Libyan-supported terrorism against US economic targets in Europe.
- He could put diplomatic pressures on Nigeria to refuse to make up the loss of Libyan oil to the US. [REDACTED]

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Once either of the military options is activated--a raid on a terrorist camp, or a direct military strike--all bets are off.

- Qadhafi is very likely to hold on to any Americans still present in Libya as a protection against further US actions.
- Remaining Americans would also probably be targets of mob action, perhaps mob violence.
- Qadhafi's political calculation and survivor instincts can no longer be counted on as restraining factors. He can be expected to retaliate with whatever means are at his disposal--including terrorism and assassination, which he considers legitimate means of statecraft against a militarily superior opponent. [REDACTED]

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IV. Regional Reactions to US Measures Against Libya

Regional reactions will vary, depending on whether the US merely makes a demarche to Libya and pulls out its citizens; undertakes economic sanctions; carries out a raid on a terrorist camp following a clear provocation; or moves against Libya militarily. In either of the last two cases, a probable Libyan response would be to call for a meeting of the Arab League, during which our friends in the area might have a hard time resisting a vote with the Libyans on a motion condemning the US action. Much would depend on the clarity of our case against the Libyans and the extent of the provocation. In certain circumstances, even friendly area states might go along with sanctions (e.g., a cut in oil production) directed against the US. [REDACTED]

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Libya would also call for a meeting of Steadfastness Front states, which would take a predictably hostile stance against the US. [REDACTED]

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Regional reactions could become more strident in the event that a US raid against Libyan terrorist camps, or a US military action, results in the deaths of third country nationals. In these cases, attacks on US facilities, a break in diplomatic relations, or other extreme reactions would be possible, particularly from the radical Arab countries. [REDACTED]

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V. Reactions of Allies

The section on the allies fails to talk about one aspect of their response: the impact on their positions on other issues if the US used their bases in an essentially unilateral operation. For Italy this question includes INF basing; at a minimum, use of bases in Italy for actions against Libya would put some more momentum behind the anti-INF movement. If Spain, use of Spanish facilities in an attack on Libya might further complicate the question of membership in NATO; anti-NATO elements like the Socialists would have an issue handed them on a silver platter.

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[REDACTED]

And of course the section understates the vehemence we could expect to encounter from nearly all the allies--particularly Chancellor Schmidt, who would also be faced with renewed noise from the SPD left. [REDACTED]

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